

Unocal-Neches River Oil Spill

Case History: In April 1993, a pipeline malfunctioned, spilling over 88,000 gallons of crude oil into the Neches River near Nederland, Jefferson County, Texas. Wind and tidal currents carried the oil across the river into Grays Bayou, Grays Cut, and Bessie Heights Channel, oiling shorelines and associated marsh areas. Approximately 31 acres were affected, along with habitat for migratory waterfowl, songbirds, marsh and shorebirds, and various species of terrestrial mammals and reptiles. Because the majority of the oil was quickly removed and impacts attenuated quickly, the Trustees worked with the Responsible Parties (RPs) to determine a reasonable settlement to be three acres of wetland marsh restoration.



[Bessie Heights Marsh](#) restoration

Responsible Parties: Unocal Corp.

Trustees:

[Texas Parks and Wildlife Department](#) (TPWD)

[Texas Commission on Environmental Quality](#) (TCEQ)

[Texas General Land Office](#) (TXGLO)

[DOI-FWS](#)



Current Status:

The RPs deposited \$200,000 into a Court Registry Account for the Trustees use in restoration planning and design, construction, planting and oversight. An additional \$20,000 was provided by the RP to cover administrative costs. The trustee preferred

restoration project was to restore 222 acres of intertidal wetlands in the Bessie Heights marsh area, where approximately 5,125 acres of marsh have been lost due to subsidence. These restoration dollars, combined with other state funds, were used to apply for a \$350,000 CWCGP grant, resulting in project funds of \$755,000 (which also includes \$100,000 from FWS Coastal Ecosystem Program). The restoration project consisted of the construction of a series of terraces where emergent vegetation was planted. The terracing construction approach was effective because the elevation of the submerged substrate was raised to a level that would allow emergent vegetative growth. Terracing also promoted the deposition and retention of suspended sediments, allowing for continued expansion of emergent marshes.

Documents:

The links below will allow you to view documents concerning the Unocal-Neches River Spill and associated restoration.

Some documents will be in PDF format and you will need [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) to view them. Some files may be large so note the file size before downloading.

TPWD – [Texas Wetland News, January 2003, Page 5](#). Bessie Heights Marsh Restoration (PDF)

[Photographs of the Unocal Spill](#), April 1993. Courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

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Other Links:

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 2 Environmental Contaminants Program Homepage](#)

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Environmental Contaminants Program Washington Office Homepage](#)